DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 045 773 UD 011 102

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Caliguri, Joseph P.; And Others |
| TITLE | Black Power Attitudes Among Students in a Black Junior High School. |
| INSTITUTION | Missouri Univ., Kansas City. Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems in Education. |
| PUB DATE | Feb 70 |
| NOTE | 32p. |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.70 |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Black Power, Junior High School Students, Lower Class Students, Middle Class, *Negro Students, Secondary Schools, *Self Concept, *Social Class, *Student Attitudes |
| IDENTIFIERS | Kansas City, Missouri |

ABSTRACT

The intent of this study is to determine what the concept "Black Power" means to black junior high school students, and to learn about the way in which such attitudes are being formed. A questionnaire was developed and pilot-tested with black students in Kansas City, Missouri. After pilot-testing indicated that most students of that age could understand and respond to the eight items on black power, a number of questions and items designed to obtain background information on respondents as well as information on social attitudes and self concept were added. The final questionnaire was administered to 149 seventh and eighth grade students. The findings concerning social class and sex differences in attitudes toward black power and related matters indicate that background variables do have some important effects on these attitudes. In addition, only a very small percentage of the students questioned attach a specific meaning to black power, or define it in a manner which indicates inclusion of politics or economics. It is suggested that discussion and study of black power might be profitable in junior high and secondary schools. (Author/JW)

# Black Power Attitudes Among Students in a Black Junior High School

Joseph P. Caliguri
School of Education - UMKC

Daniel U. Levine
Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems in Education

Irene Marcus
Central Junior High School

and

Ahden Tangeman
Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems in Education

(Additional copies of the report may be obtained by writing to
The Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems in Education
5100 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64110)



February, 1970

# Black Power Attitudes Among Students in a Black Junior High School

Joseph Caliguri, Daniel Levine,
Irene Marcus and Ahden Tangeman

"What I feared . . . and what I still fear is that Black Power would remain at the level of psychological self-esteem. That we would stop with new hair styles instead of striving onward for new life styles."

Reverend Jesse Jackson

## Purpose of the Study

Despite the tremendous amount of attention and the reams of literature which have been devoted to the concept of Black Power, it appears that almost no research has been conducted to determine what Americans - whether black or white - think of the concept and how they define it. It is clear that many black citizens say they feel "good" when they hear the term "Black Power." Yet it is equally obvious that other black citizens are hesitant to use the concept or the term, and it is not at all clear what different people have in mind when they hear it or use it.

Since students now in the secondary schools will become voters in a few years and will be asked to respond to the statements of political and community leaders who often talk about Black Power, and since the black student union movement has become prominent in many high schools, it may be of particular interest to study the opinions and attitudes toward Black Power of secondary students in order to determine whether the findings may have implications for their teachers and administrators. The purpose of the present study was to work out methods for studying attitudes related to the concept of Black Power of students in predominantly-black secondary schools, to examine these attitudes in terms of several fundamental issues involving Black Power, and to determine whether these findings might have implications for the schools.

## Identification and Importance of the Issues

It is difficult to realize that only four or five years have elapsed since Adam Clayton Powell and Stokely Carmichael began to use the term "Black Power" in speeches delivered in 1965 and 1966. During this relatively brief period of time Black Power has become a familiar phrase repeated in social and political discussions in every section of the country and a rallying cry for black Americans.

The countless number of books and articles which have been written on the topic of Black Power during the past few years also stands as testimony to the importance of this concept. Yet, the term itself is one which probably has been given as wide a diversity of meanings - and therefore has as little definite or agreed meaning attached to it - as any in contemporary social debate. Thus Charles V. Hamilton, co-author of perhaps the best-known book on this subject, has described the situation as follows in introducing a discussion of the concept of Black Power in an article in The New York Times:

> Black Power has many definitions and connotations in the rhetoric of race relations today. . . .Ultimately, I suspect, we have to accept the fact that, in this highly charged atmosphere, it is virtually impossible to come up with a single definition satisfactory to all.[1]

About all that has been clearly obvious in the discussions and speeches of black leaders who have popularized the concept of Black Power is that the growing emphasis on this concept has come about as a result of the continuing failure of efforts to attain anything approaching full economic and social equality for black Americans. Psychologist Kenneth Clark has summarized this feeling as follows:

> The basic problem of the Northern Negro, as I see it, is a question of power. The Negro does not have political power, business power, or industrial or labor power. . . .The Negro in the North is bereft of all power and has only the power to disrupt.[2]

As Harold Cruse has summarized the situation in his book on The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual:

> Black Power was raised. . . ./when/ direct action-protest had been defeated by certain structural barriers of society. . . . /thus forcing Black Americans/ to put action aside and start thinking. . . .From this point on, the direct actionists advanced to the slogan of Black Power. . . .instead of radical integrationism the theme became economic and political control by blacks in the black ghettoes and in geographical areas of black majority in the South (original italics).[2]

The themes most generally associated with the term Black Power, then, involve a stress on political unity and an insistence on more self-determination in communities which are entirely or predominantly black.

From this point on, however, advocates of Black Power may take any of a multiplicity of positions in implicitly or explicitly translating the term into more specific and concrete implications and meanings.

For example, in many respects it is a relatively short step from insisting on more control over economic and political decisions and conditions in black communities

---

[1]Charles V. Hamilton, "An Advocate of Black Power Defines It," The New York Times Magazine, April 15, 1968, pp. 21, 23.

[2]Leonard Katz and Ted Poston, "Clark Hits Unions for Bias," New York Times, May 13, 1969.

[2]Harold Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (New York: Morrow, 1967), pp. 544, 547.

to a position which emphasizes fully independent and separate development and control of these communities. Thus most if not all black leaders agree that economic institutions in the ghetto should provide jobs and purchasing power for the people who live there, but some believe that not much can be accomplished unless economic, political, and social institutions in the ghetto are completely controlled by blacks or are developed completely separately from national institutions believed to be responsible for the repression and exploitation of black Americans.

A related issue is the degree to which violence must or should be used to improve economic and social conditions for black Americans. A few prominent advocates of Black Power have gained a good deal of public attention by repeating Mao Tse Tsung's statement to the effect that power resides in the barrel of a gun and by urging black citizens to acquire arms.

Still another question which occasions widespread disagreement within the Black Power movement is whether black Americans should try to work within alliances with other groups which may share common interests on a particular political issue or should try to work separately from other political organizations in order to build a basis of power for negotiating with others. Raymond S. Franklin has summarized these contrasting points of view as the difference between "coalition" and "co-racial" politics.[4] To Franklin, only the latter policy with its strong emphasis on a separate power base for black Americans is validly a part of the Black Power concept.

In calling on black Americans to exercise more power in American society, Black Power spokesmen clearly are appealing to their listeners to feel less helpless in the face of the complex forces which have prevented them from participating fully in many of the opportunities which are supposed to be available to all Americans. Black Power, to those who employ the term primarily as a means to overcome feelings of helplessness, exclusion, and defeat which are thought to be widespread among residents of low-income, racial ghettoes, often stresses the goals of building a sense of pride in being black and of increasing commitment to and identification with the welfare of black people wherever they may live.

Hamilton has summarized many of these diverse definitions of Black Power in the following passage:

> To some people, it is synonymous with premeditated acts of violence to destroy the political and economic institutions of the country. Others equate Black Power with plans to rid the civil-rights movement of whites who have been in it for years. The concept is understood by many to mean hatred of and separation from whites; it is associated with calling whites 'honkies' and with shouts of 'Burn, baby, burn.' Some understand it to be the use of pressure-group tactics in the accepted tradition of American political process. And still others say that Black Power must be seen first of all as an attempt to instill a sense of identity and pride in black people.[5]

---

[4] Raymond S. Franklin, "The Political Economy of Black Power," Social Problems, v. 69, no. 3 (Winter 1969), 286-301.

[5] Hamilton, op. cit.

That it is possible to identify many differing definitions of Black Power does not make it any less important to assess the arguments and positions put forward by persons who represent various schools of thought on this issue and to determine how widely these positions are understood and accepted. Differences of opinion over what Black Power should or does mean constitute controversies crucial to the future of black Americans and hence to the development and future of the country as a whole.

Consider, for example, the position taken by Cruse in his "Postscript on Black Power - The Dialogue Between Shadow and Substance." Cruse accepts the proposition that "the Negro in America has been conditioned in many ways to a disrespect of blackness"[6] and therefore tends to agree in substance with Roy Innis of CORE whom he quotes as arguing that:

> There is an impelling need to emphasize 'Black Power' until doomsday, but until black children stop saying, 'You're blacker than me and so is your mama'; until grown black men stop using black as a curse word. . . .in short, until black people accept values meaningful to themselves, there can be no completely effective organizing for the development of Black Power.[7]

Cruse also goes on to insist, however, that efforts limited or devoted primarily to building a positive sense of group identity among black Americans not only may not succeed in bringing about much change in the condition and status of black people but are likely to interfere with or draw attention from what he sees as the need to specify and implement appropriate economic and social programs radical enough to achieve fundamental changes in the structure and functioning of American society. "If," Cruse argues,

> a person has a low opinion of himself and is unhappy because he lives in a filthy, dilapidated, rat-infested house, you cannot tell him to apply positive thinking - and 'be happy!' Happiness will begin to blossom only when he finds a way to get out of his physical trap into improved surroundings. . . . If Innis truly believes that there can be no 'effective organizing' . . . until Negroes stop derogating 'blackness,' then he will never see 'Black Power,' whatever he means by it.[8]

Among black groups which agree with this general conclusion that a stress on cultural identity is insufficient and often even undesirable because it tends to become a substitute for radical political and economic change are the leaders of the Black Panther Party who have been engaged in disputes with groups advocating "cultural nationalism" and have been particularly critical of the refusal of some

---

[6] Cruse, op. cit.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., pp. 551, 561.

nationalist groups to work with whites on the grounds that cooperation with sympathetic whites would detract from the development of Black Identity. Panther Chairman Bobby Seale, for example, has been very explicit in explaining why his party believes cultural nationalists are the "enemy of revolutionaries":

> . . . We think the cultural nationalist's ideology is very limited. The first thing they start talking about is their culture. They're trying to identify, they're the ones who've been lost, that have been the most disconnected with the culture of Africa or what have you or whatever they think they might need to sustain themselves. /They/ . . . have their intellectual possessions still in pawn to the Man's system so much that they begin to hate a white person simply because of the color of their skin. That's really practicing the same racism that exists in the system we are trying to destroy.[9]

Others, however, turn the argument around and conclude that a Black Power movement emphasizing cultural identity and separate institutional development is the most promising strategy for bringing about improvement in the conditions in black ghettoes. Thus Helen Icken Safa, for example, has taken the position that:

> Hostility toward whites is obviously not enough to unify the Negro community. The ethnic solidarity of Negroes must be based primarily on sentiments which are pro-Negro rather than anti-white. . . .
>
> . . . Separatism goes far beyond the aims of the integrationists, who aimed primarily at the assimilation of the American Negro by raising his socioeconomic status in the larger society. Separatism attempts to establish for the Negro a sense of racial pride and identity which has long been denied him in American society.[10]

Underlying all these disagreements and nuances concerning the meanings which should be given to Black Power and the directions it should take to improve the lot of black Americans is the fundamental question of whether political movements with any substantial emphasis on separate development constitute or can constitute a constructive force in a complex urban society. This question, of course, is the critical issue which the Kerner Commission unsuccessfully tried to persuade white Americans to take seriously when it called attention to the dangers of our present drift toward two relatively separate societies. Max Ways is one of many observers who have bluntly questioned whether a Black Power movement or any other movement stressing separatism is a viable response to the problems characteristic of contemporary metropolitan America:

---

[9]Quoted in The Black Panther, Monday, March 3, 1969, p. 10.

[10]Helen Icken Safa, "The Case for Negro Separatism: The Crisis of Identity in the Negro Community," Urban Affairs Quarterly, v. IV, no. 1 (September, 1968), p.58.

> It is natural and wholesome that Negroes, angry at the schools' failure with their children, should seek to control school boards. If Negroes believe that the police harass their race, they have the right to try to take charge . . . of the police departments. . . .But the city has already deteriorated to the point where . . . Negroes will face the same formidable array of difficulties that the whites have failed to overcome. . . .
>
> Black Power will in practice mean more segregation, more atomized sovereignty, more descent toward the anticity, the condition where there is no power because there is no cooperation, no love, no sense of common danger and common destiny. The future of the city will not be served if the housing projects and the slums become stockades of the kind of narrow separatism that permeates the stockades in the /suburban/ minimeadows.[11]

One other question which must be asked in connection with a concept as ill-defined yet widely-supported as Black Power is whether or in what ways the public and its elected representatives may be either overreacting to or underestimating its impact on black Americans. On the one hand there is a tendency to believe that individuals who shout the loudest in an effort to build support among the masses of black Americans may drown out the voice of leaders striving to organize political power around pragmatic programs for improving the lives of people in the ghetto. Given its emotional appeal to large numbers of people who have long been denied equal rights, Black Power easily can become a slogan aimed at winning the acclamation of an audience rather than a program for achieving specific goals. Whitney Young once remarked that, "I could stand up in Harlem and call Lyndon Johnson a crackpot and get headlines. But if I meet with an auto executive and get 5,000 jobs for my people, I get no attention."[12] It must be tempting to seek the headlines rather than organize real support to gain the jobs.

The fact that appeals to Black Power may gain much emotional support but little effective day-to-day political support also means that the degree to which black Americans strongly desire real change in American life may be easily underestimated. On the one hand, informed laymen and government officials know that although Black Power has wide emotional appeal, they also know that "The American Negro," as Norman Miler has pointed out, "is of course not sysnonymous with Black Power. For every Black militant, there are ten Negroes who live quietly beside him in the slums, resigned for the most part to the lessons, the action, and the treadmill of the slums."[13] It is largely for this reason, according to Ralph W. Conant, that "White influentials who find themselves confronted with 'black power' demands ordinarily reject them as unrealistic. What they mean by unrealistic is

---

[11]Max Ways, "The Deeper Shame of the Cities," Fortune, (January, 1968), p. 206.

[12]Business Week, February 3, 1968, p. 124.

[13]Norman Mailer, "Looking for the Meat and Potatoes-Thoughts on Black Power," k, January 7, 1969, p. 58.

that the blacks who present them have no bargaining power."[14] On the other hand, this realization that Black Power is not presently a unified movement in support of specific programs and demands for fundamental social change may tend to cause government officials to minimize the extent to which demands made in its name indeed can draw on and mobilize deep reservoirs of emotional feeling in propitious circumstances; from this point of view Mailer is right in implying that the concept's emotional appeal may be more important than its lack of definition:

> . . . no American Negro is contemptuous of Black Power. Like the accusing finger in the dream, it is the rarest nerve in the head, the frightening pulse in the heart. . . .Black Power obviously derives from a heritage of anger.[15]

Specific Issues Investigated in the Study

The major purposes of the present study are to determine what the concept of Black Power means to black students of junior-high school age and to learn as much as possible concerning the way in which attitudes on this important topic are being formed. Even before undertaking this exploratory study we were well aware that young people in junior high school generally do not have specific and well-formulated attitudes on political and social issues and that the level of sophistication and understanding which teenagers possess on abstract socio-political concepts such as Black Power usually is considered to be rather low. Nevertheless, if it is recognized that it is precisely in the junior high school that attitudes toward Black Power may be undergoing rapid development and modification, the potential importance of studying the attitudes of black junior high school students toward Black Power should be fairly obvious. Among the important questions which should be asked in an exploratory study of this type are the following: What do black junior high school students think of "Black Power"? Do they view the concept favorably? How specific are their understandings of and attitudes toward Black Power? From what sources are they receiving information about Black Power, and what sources influence their attitudes toward it? How much importance do they think it is likely to have in their lives?

In addition to these fundamental questions involving the orientation of black junior high school students toward Black Power, data obtained from students of secondary school age also might throw light on several specific questions currently important to an understanding of the Black Power movement generally, and the black student-union movement specifically.

One such question is whether there are social class differences in views toward and support of the Black Power in general and militant or ultramilitant wings of the Black Power movement in particular. A commonly-held point of view on this issue is that black youngsters from working-class or lower-income families tend to be more "radical" or "revolutionary" than black youngsters from middle-income or socially-mobile families. Eldridge Cleaver, for example, has taken this position in advancing the following point of view concerning unrest among black students on college campuses:

---

[14]Ralph W. Conant, "Black Power: Rhetoric and Reality," Urban Affairs Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1968), p. 23.

[15]Mailer, op. cit.

> They /Panther leaders Bobby Seale and Huey Newton/ discovered that there are problems with starting a revolutionary movement among blacks at the college level because almost all black college students are from the black bourgeoisie. . . .
>
> The black students now in high school find it much easier to relate to the revolutionary ideas than do the black college students. When they get to college they will wash away this regressive phenomenon.[16]

Some other observers familiar with problems of unrest in the colleges, however, have argued that working-class youth, especially those seeking mobility through a college education, tend to be relatively non-radical in their views on social issues. According to Alex Garber, for example, these youngsters "put up with the rigmarole, the ritual, and the deadliness of the courses in these fields for the sake of advancement."[17] While Garber does recognize that black working-class students are likely to have special grievances which will lead to strife and disruption on many campuses, his basic conclusion is that these working-class students probably will not provide a good base for a revolutionary movement:

> Outbursts by black students may either be an attempt to get some immediate gains or an expression of frustration and anger. As a strategy it will not be tolerated for long by most black students - a majority are not for intransigent demands or extremist tactics - /just/ as the ghetto rioters were not tolerated for long by the black community.[18]

A second question of unusual current interest is whether black youngsters are more interested in the concept of Black Power, more favorable toward it, and/or more inclined to support a militant definition of it than are their parents. Incidents such as recently occurred at the Vincennes School in Chicago would lead one to expect that many black youngsters may tend to be more Black Power "conscious" than their parents. Vincennes is an all-black school at which students submitted a list of demands to the principal. Parents at the school formed a group called the Concerned Parents at Vincennes and requested that certain demands, such as the introduction of Afro-American history and the building of a new school, be granted, but they also instructed the principal to reject other demands such as one calling for an all-black faculty.[19]

While the present study did not include any parents in the sample, we were able to explore this issue by asking students for a brief description of their parents orientations on Black Power.

---

[16] Henry E. Weinstein, "Conversation with Cleaver," The Nation, Vol. 208, No. 3 (January 20, 1968), p. 74.

[17] Alex Garber, "Working Class and Elite Youth Don't Have Much in Common," New America, Vol. u, No. 4 (January 30, 1969), p. 2.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Integrated Education, Vol. 7, No. 1 (January-February, 1969) p. 8.

Other questions which might contribute to an understanding of the Black Power movement are those which relate additional student characteristics to viewpoints on Black Power. For example, are young men more favorably disposed toward or more suppoetive of the Black Power concept than young women? Are students with a high self-concept more favorable than students with a low self-concept? Are students' views on Black Power related to their feelings concerning African or Afro-American clothing?

A study which deals with the attitudes of only 149 students in one school in a single city obviously cannot be used to generalize concerning the attitudes of young people in other parts of the country or even of other students in the same city. Despite this obvious limitation, however, we believe that an exploratory study of the kind described in this paper not only will suggest questions and instruments which researchers may want to utilize in other places or with other age groups but also will prove of some interest to educators as well as other persons working with black junior high school students wherever they may go to school.

## Procedures

To carry out this exploratory study of the attitudes and perceptions of black junior high school students toward the concept of Black Power, an eight-item questionnaire was developed and pilot tested with students in one class at a junior high attended almost entirely by black students in Kansas City, Missouri. In order to avoid eliciting pre-determined responses from respondents whose attitudes on a topic as hard-to-define as Black Power probably are fluid and amorphous, all eight items were open-ended. Despite the much larger task involved in categorizing and comparing responses to open-ended than to objective-type items, it was felt that answers volunteered to open-ended items would be more revealing of respondents' thinking on and exposure to the Black Power concept than would answers given in terms of pre-determined response categories.

After pilot testing indicated that most students of junior high school age could understand and respond to the eight items dealing with Black Power, a number of questions and items designed to obtain background information on respondents and various measures related to their self-concepts and general social attitudes were added to the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire was administered to 149 seventh and eighth grade students at the junior high school cited above (but excluding the class that had been pilot tested) during an eight-day period in the fall of 1968. The eight classes in which the questionnaire was administered were judged by teachers in the school to be roughly representative of the overall school population on measures such as ability, social class, and race. Questionnaires were administered by classroom teachers who assured students that their answers would be anonymous and pointed out that respondents were not to enter their names on the questionnaire. All the teachers who took part in administering the questionnaire were black.

Of the eight classes included in the sample, three were high-ability classes as classified according to school grouping procedures which utilized test scores as well as teacher evaluations, three were medium- or average-ability classes, and two were low-ability classes.

Of the 149 respondents in the sample, 53 were male and 96 were female. Social class of respondents was computed utilizing Hollingshead's Two-Factor Index of Social Position. Application of this instrument resulted in the following distribution of students according to the five categories derived from Hollingshead's formula: Social Class I (S.C.I) - 3; S.C.II - 3; S.C.III - 16; S.C.IV - 75; and S.C.V - 52.

In everyday terminology, these five categories correspond roughly to the following social class groupings: S.C.I - upper status; S.C.II - upper middle status; S.C.III - lower middle status; S.C.IV - upper lower status; and S.C.V - low status.

Because of the relatively small number of respondents in categories I, II, and III, these categories were combined for purposes of analysis into one category, S.C.I-III. For convenience, respondents in this category can be referred to either as students from middle- and upper-class families or as students from higher status homes.

## Scoring of Responses and Reliability of the Scoring

The first step in analyzing the data was to establish categories for scoring subjects' responses. After becoming thoroughly familiar with the responses which had been given to the eight open-ended items included on the questionnaire, one of the researchers constructed categories in which it was thought the great majority of response could be placed. Next, a second reader independently constructed categories to fit the responses. Overall, the first reader established 38 response categories for the eight items. Thirty-one of the 38 categories independently established by the second reader were essentially the same as categories which had been established by the first reader, and on only one item (#1) did the second reader fail to suggest more than half of the categories established by the first reader. It was decided that the two readers were in sufficiently close agreement to justify proceeding by using the categories suggested by the first reader.

The next step in data reduction was to classify the responses of each subject on each item into one or another of the response categories for that item. After this was done for all 149 questionnaires by one of the researchers, sixty questionnaires were selected at random and the responses given on them were placed in the response categories by four additional readers. Then the percentage of responses on which each of the four reviewers agreed with the category placement selected by the first reader was calculated for each item, and the four percentages thus obtained for each item were averaged to obtain a reliability measure. Mean reliability scores obtained in this way varied from 70 to 86 percent for the eight items.

## Perceptions and Feelings About Black Power

In responding to the question, "What does Black Power mean to you?", 146 students wrote out answers which were judged to constitute 172 responses with separate meanings. All but fourteen of these responses were classifiable within the following seven response categories.

Power (undefined) - Responses which were essentially circular (e.g., "Black Power means the power of the Negro people" and which therefore were so general as to leave the term Black

Power undefined.)

| | |
|---|---|
| Power to achieve rights | - Responses which referred to Black Power as the movement to achieve the rights of black Americans. |
| Pride | - Responses emphasizing Black Power as a movement to build up or demonstrate pride in race among black Americans. |
| Respect | - Responses stressing Black Power as a means to win respect from other groups. |
| Violence | - Responses viewing Black Power as the use of violence to attain Negro goals. |
| Nothing | - Responses of students who said Black Power has no real meaning for them. |

The distribution of student responses within these content categories is shown in Table 1. The data in Table 1 show that students in our sample tend to define Black Power in general and vague terms. Approximately half the responses given to the question, "What does Black Power mean to you?" either defined Black Power circularly without specifying what power might accomplish or generally as the movement to attain rights for Black Americans.

Table 1

Responses to the Item, "What Does Black Power Mean to You?"

| Meaning Category | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Power (undefined) | 45 | 26 |
| Power to achieve rights | 39 | 23 |
| Pride | 30 | 17 |
| Respect | 4 | 02 |
| Violence | 9 | 05 |
| Nothing | 31 | 18 |
| Other | 14 | 08 |
| | 172 | 99* |

The only other meaning which a substantial number of students attributed to Black Power involved the category of "pride"; approximately one-sixth of the students said that the term Black Power refers to development of or insistence on pride in race. Another eighteen percent of the students, however, said that Black Power meant "nothing" to them.

---

*Due to rounding, total percentages in this and several other tables do not add up to 100.

Points worth noting here are that there is limited but far from complete agreement on the meaning of Black Power among the junior high school students in our sample. On the one hand it is interesting that 66% of the responses were distributed in the two categories of power and pride. On the other hand, it should also be noted that very few respondents attached any specific meanings to these rather general terms. And even among the 39 students who did specify that Black Power had something to do with rights, only four respondents referred to specifically political manifestations (e.g., gain political offices; achieve civil rights), and only six referred to economic possibilities (e.g., gain more jobs). Perhaps this absence of specificity in defining or perceiving Black Power is not surprising in view of the fact that there is little agreement concerning its meaning among black adults or even among black intellectuals and leaders who use the term most often.

One other notable point is that only 5% of the students defined Black Power in terms of violence. Assuming that violence and conflict generally are not highly valued among black junior high school students, one can conclude that Black Power is not primarily a negative concept among the students in our sample, even though they do not generally define it precisely or concretely.

That the students in our sample do not have uniformly positive feelings about Black Power, however, is indicated by the fact that 42% of the responses to the item, "When you hear or talk about Black Power, how do you feel?" were scored in the categories "negative," "nothing," "ashamed," and "it all depends" (Table 2). On the other hand, more than twice as many of the responses (43%) fell into the two presumably positive categories "proud" and "good" than fell into the categories of "negative" and "ashamed" (17%); thus these data support the conclusion that although black students of junior high school age tend to respond favorably to the concept of Black Power, this response is not uniformly or strongly enthusiastic.[20]

---

[20] Our finding that most respondents did not have very specific definitions of Black Power but did tend to support the concept in the abstract agrees closely with the findings of a Newsweek national poll of attitudes in "Black America" released in June of 1969. Newsweek summarized its findings on the meaning of Black Power as follows:

> Carmichael's 'black power' remains as fuzzy and as various in definition as ever . . . But whatever it means, Negroes like the way it sounds. They recoiled from the slogan three years ago, when it was mint-fresh from the Meredity march in Mississippi and still a bit scary, but they favor it . . . today. Newsweek, June 30, 1969, p. 20.

Table 2

Responses to the Item, "When You Hear or Talk About Black Power, How Do You Feel?"

| Reaction Category | Number of Responses | Percentage of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Proud | 26 | 19 |
| Good | 33 | 24 |
| It depends | 22 | 16 |
| Ashamed | 2 | 01 |
| Negative | 22 | 16 |
| Nothing | 13 | 9 |
| Other | 20 | 14 |
| | 138 | 99 |

Further evidence that students in our sample do not tend to define Black Power in very concrete terms or to make a sharp differentiation among its possible political, economic, and cultural meanings and implications was found in responses to the item, "Is there a difference between Black Power and Black Pride?" Although 52% of the 137 students who responded to this item said they did see a difference between the terms (Table 3), only 17 students wrote in answers which distinguished between the two terms with reference to their differing emphases on power and feelings respectively.

Table 3

Responses to the Item, "Is there a difference between Black Power and Black Pride?"

| Response | Percentage of Responses |
|---|---|
| Yes (N = 71) | 52 |
| No (N = 44) | 32 |
| Don't Know (N = 22) | 16 |
| | 100 |

To obtain additional information on perceptions of Black Power, we included the item, "Do you think Black Power will change anything in your life?" Among the 129 students who responded to this item, only 29% said they thought Black Power would result in changes in their life; the remaining 71% said either that they did not think (50%) or did not know (21%) whether Black Power would change their lives.

Sources and Communication of Attitudes Concerning Black Power

Respondents were asked to react to the item, "What were the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power?" Of the 127 who responded, 57% said that other people had influenced their thinking about Black Power, 35% said that the mass media had been an important influence, and 16% said that their general perceptions of social conditions or developments had a major effect in their thinking about Black Power.

Table 4

Responses to the Item, "What Were the Most Important Influences in Your Thinking About Black Power?"

| Source | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents (N = 127) |
|---|---|---|
| Mass media | 44 | 35 |
| Other people | 73 | 57 |
| Perceived social conditions | 21 | 16 |
| Self | 22 | 17 |
| Nobody | 9 | 07 |
| Other | 9 | 07 |

Clues as to who the "other people" are whom more than half the respondents said were influencing their thinking about Black Power are provided in responses to the item, "Who do you talk to about Black Power?" Omitting 32 students who said "nobody," 101 students gave 193 responses to this item. Of these 193 responses, 88% were from students who said they talked to their friends about Black Power, 24% referred to relatives (e.g., cousins) apparently of about the same age as respondents, 36% specified immediate family members (usually parents) as the relatives with whom respondents talked, and 12% were from students who said they talked to their teachers about Black Power (Table 5).

Table 5

Responses to the Item, "Who Do You Talk to About Black Power?"

| Response | Number of Responses | Percentage of Respondents (N = 101) |
|---|---|---|
| Friend | 89 | 88 |
| Young Relatives | 24 | 24 |
| Families (parents) | 36 | 36 |
| Teachers | 12 | 12 |
| Nobody | 32 | 32 |

These data suggest that students in our sample tend to be looking first to friends and age-mates for information or reactions concerning the meaning of Black Power, although substantial numbers also are talking to their parents (families) and/or are being influenced considerably by information from the mass media. Only a very small handful are seeking and/or receiving guidance from their teachers in coming to terms with this important concept.

One major reason why relatively few students seem to be seeking or accepting much guidance from parents or other adult family members in thinking about Black Power may be because many parents either do not bring up the topic or express negative feelings toward the concept. In responding to the item, "What do your parents and people you know say about Black Power?" (Table 6), 75% of the students who were able to answer said that the views of parents and other people they knew either were unknown to them or were negative or that their parents and others did not say anything about Black Power.* (Among the 28 students whose responses were

* We did not succeed in classifying the responses of 23 students who responded to this item.

classified as reporting negative reactions, typical answers were, "My parents say it's nonsense," "They say it's just a lot of talk," and "My parents say it means trouble and hate.")

Table 6

Responses to the Item, "What Do Your Parents and People You Know Say About Black Power?"*

| Response Category | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Views are negative | 28 | 26 |
| Views are "understanding" or otherwise favorable | 27 | 25 |
| Views unknown | 14 | 13 |
| They say nothing | 38 | 36 |
| | 107 | 100 |

Since we scored 59 students as feeling positive ("proud" or "good") about Black Power (Table 2) but only 27 students clearly indicated that their parents were "understanding" or favorable toward the concept, we conclude that the young black Americans in our sample tend to be more positive about Black Power than their parents and other adults. However, our data also indicate that parents' views in some circumstances may be an important element in influencing our respondents' thinking about Black Power.

The strong influence of parents and other people on students' views concerning Black Power is underlined by cross-tabulating responses to the two items dealing respectively with respondents' and others' feelings about Black Power (as perceived and reported by students). Table 7 shows the orientations toward Black Power of students who said their parents and other people they knew were negative, understanding, or uncommunicative, or that they did not know about parents' and others' views.

*We did not succeed in classifying the responses of 23 students who responded to this item.

Table 7

Relation Between Others' Views and Respondents' Views Concerning Black Power

| What do your parents and people you know say about Black Power | When you hear or talk about Black Power, how do you feel?* Positive % (N) | Negative % (N) |
|---|---|---|
| Views are negative | 33 (9/27) | 41 (11/27) |
| Views are "understanding" or otherwise favorable | 78 (21/27) | 04 (1/27) |
| Views unknown | 64 (9/14) | 0 (0/14) |
| They say nothing | 25 (9/36) | 22 (8/36) |

*The categories "Proud" and "Good" were considered positive; the categories "Ashamed" and "Negative" were considered negative. Two students who responded to the item on others' views did not respond to the item asking for their own reactions.

As shown in Table 7, respondents who say that parents and other people they know either are negative or say nothing about Black Power are almost equally likely to be themselves positive or negative about Black Power. Among those respondents who say parents and others either are favorable or have not made their views known about Black Power, by way of contrast, the large majority are themselves positive and only one is negative about Black Power.

The very strong association between claiming not to know what parents and others think about Black Power and being positive about Black Power suggests that some respondents who are favorable toward Black Power may have parents or friends who are negative but would prefer to ignore indications of this or avoid talking about Black Power with parents and friends rather than be confronted with views in disagreement with their own. The association seems too strong, however, to explain entirely in this manner, and hence we conclude not only that respondents' reactions toward Black Power are substantially influenced by the views of their parents and other people with whom they come in contact but also that other outside influences evidently are creating a favorable disposition toward Black Power among respondents whose immediate family and friends have not made their views known.

Other Differences between Respondents Positive and Negative Toward Black Power

More can be inferred about the sources of our respondents' feelings concerning Black Power by comparing the responses on other items of those whose expressed feelings were rated as positive ("Proud" or "Good") and those whose feelings were rated as negative ("Ashamed" or "Negative") toward Black Power. Responses of these two groups to the items, "What does Black Power mean to you?" and "What were the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power?" are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Responses on Two Items of Respondents Positive and Negative Toward Black Power

| What does Black Power mean to you?* | When you hear or talk about Black Power, how do you feel? Positive % (N) | Negative % (N) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pride | 39 (23/59) | 04 (1/24) | $X^2 = 8.44$; $p < .01$ |
| Power | 34 (20/59) | 33 (8/24) | $X^2$ = n.s. |
| Rights | 27 (16/59) | 18 (4/24) | $X^2$ = n.s. |
| Nothing | 07 (4/59) | 33 (8/24) | $X^2 = 7.70$; $p < .01$ |
| **What are the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power?*** | | | |
| Mass media | 27 (16/59) | 08 (2/24) | $X^2$ = n.s. |
| Other people | 84 (50/59) | 63 (15/24) | $X^2 = 3.75$; $p < .10$ |
| Perceived social conditions | 30 (18/59) | 25 (6/24) | $X^2$ = n.s. |
| Self or nobody | 14 (8/59) | 46 (11/24) | $X^2 = 8.32$; $p < .01$ |

*Respondents were able to give more than one answer in responding to this item

The data in Table 8 indicate that respondents who report having positive feelings about Black Power more often define the concept in terms of black pride than do respondents with negative feelings about Black Power. Conversely, one-third of those who have negative feelings about Black Power say that the term means "nothing" to them, as contrasted with only seven percent of those who are positive about Black Power. One-third of each group does not attach much meaning to the concept beyond its self-evident connection with "power."

Respondents who are positive about Black Power more often say that other people influenced their thinking than do respondents who are negative about Black Power, while the latter more often say that no outside source influenced their thinking than do the former.

Since it is not legitimate to assume that two related variables are causally related in a particular direction, we are not able to conclude with certainty that positive views toward Black Power among our respondents are being derived from outside sources and that negative views are being derived from independent thinking on the part of more skeptical respondents. However, the data presented in the preceding sections are internally consistent in suggesting the following general picture concerning the sources of views about Black Power among the students in our sample:

The young black students in our sample occasionally talk to other people - particularly friends - about Black Power, but most of this discussion is on a very

general level which does not deal with specific issues and only about half of the friends and relatives with whom they talk either are clearly positive or negative about Black Power. When parents and others with whom a student comes in contact are negative about Black Power, respondents tend to be relatively negative themselves,[21] but when parents and others are favorable or at least not openly unfavorable, respondents tend to acquire positive views emphasizing Black Power as a source of pride in being black. Among respondents who are negative about Black Power, however, there is less disposition to pay much attention to these sources, because they conflict with already-acquired beliefs; hence students with negative views about Black Power are more likely to say they depend on their own thinking and are less likely to define Black Power in terms of pride than are those who are favorable toward the concept.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Black Power gains most support from black youngsters whose friends and relatives not only are not negative about the concept but actively promote it as a means to develop black pride.

Attitudes Toward Black Power, General Attitudes, and Self-Concept

To further explore the meaning of Black Power attitudes among black junior-high school students, an analysis was made of the responses of students who were positive and negative toward Black Power to a number of items dealing with self-concept, success in school, and general outlook on society.

Outlook toward society was measured by seven items which have been widely used to assess differences in social attitudes among various social and economic groups. The items chosen included questions on planning and goals for the future, fatalism-optimism, and orientation toward family vs. orientation toward careers. Five Likert-type response categories ranging from "Disagree Very Much" to "Agree Very Much" were used to obtain scores ranging from one point (agree) to five points (disagree) for each student on each item. The seven items included in this part of the questionnaire were the following:

1. All I want out of life in the way of a career is a secure not too difficult job, with enough pay to afford a nice car and eventually a home of my own.

2. When a man is born the success he is going to have is already in the cards so he might just as well accept it and not fight against it.

4. Nothing is worth the sacrifice of moving away from my parents.

5. Planning only makes a person unhappy, since your plans hardly ever work out anyway.

[21] 46% of the 24 respondents with negative views were drawn from the 18% of students in the larger sample who said their parents and other people were negative.

6. Nowadays with world conditions the way they are, the wise person lives for today and lets tomorrow take care of itself.

7. A good son would try to live near his parents even if it meant giving up a good job in another part of the country.

When a respondent's scores are added together to form a scale from 7 to 35, a high score represents a high degree of fatalism, familism, and emphasis on attainment of present-oriented satisfactions. Conversely, a low score represents high career aspirations, emphasis on planning and on postponement of gratification to ensure future success, willingness to minimize security goals to improve one's status, and a feeling that hard work pays off in terms of material success. The latter set of attitudes is more likely to be associated with social and economic mobility in our society than is the former.

When the responses of students who were positive toward Black Power were compared with the responses of students who were negative, the mean scores for both groups were almost exactly on the middle-point (21) of the scale: respondents who were positive had a mean score of 21.14, while respondents who were negative had a mean score of 21.29. Thus it was concluded that the two groups did not differ in attitudes tapped by the seven items.

Three additional items were used to assess sense of control over the environment and one's future. All three items were used in the U. S. Office of Education's major study of Equality of Educational Opportunity,[22] in which (as in other studies) they proved very useful in differentiating among black students on a number of important characteristics. One reason these items were used was to determine whether students who are positive toward Black Power feel a greater or lesser sense of powerlessness and hopelessness than students who are negative toward Black Power. The three items, which used the same response categories as the previous seven, were:

1. Good luck is more important than hard work for success.

2. People like me don't have much of a chance to be successful in life.

3. Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops me.

On a scale running from three to fifteen using these three items, the group positive toward Black Power had a mean score of 11.91 and the group negative toward Black Power had a mean score of 11.54. Thus it was concluded that the two groups did not differ on sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. It is interesting to note, however, that both groups fell fairly far toward the powerless-hopeless end of the scale.

Using the same scoring system as above, the item, "In most school subjects I am one of the best students in my class" was included to determine whether the two

---

[22] James S. Coleman, et. al. Equality of Educational Opportunity (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

groups were similar or different in self-reported academic success. Scores for the two groups were nearly identical on this item: 3.70 for the group positive toward Black Power and 3.71 for the group negative toward Black Power.

Self-concept was assessed by using a twenty-four item scale which measures four dimensions of self-evaluation: Social Competence (e.g., "liked by other children"; "big help at home"); Academic Competence (e.g., "good in school"); Personal Competence (e.g., "good in making things"; "good in sports"). These dimensions of self-concept have been reported as differentiating between academically-successful and academically-unsuccessful students from low-income families in Harlem, New York.[23] The mean scores for the groups which were positive and negative toward Black Power were as follows:

| | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| Social Competence | 15.35 | 15.00 |
| Academic Competence | 15.23 | 15.46 |
| Personal Competence | 15.35 | 14.54 |
| Nonintellectual Competence | 13.60 | 12.63 |

These data indicate that there is not a systematic difference in self-concept (as measured above) between respondents who are positive and respondents who are negative about Black Power. This conclusion was further supported by the results of a semantic-differential measure of self-concept in which subjects were asked to respond to the concept "muself" in terms of seven sets of polar adjectives; respondents in the two groups responded in a similar fashion when describing themselves in terms of each set of adjectives.[24]

---

[23] Helen H. Davidson and Judith W. Greenburg, Student Achievers from a Deprived Background (New York: The City College of the City University of New York, May 1967).

[24] The seven sets of adjectives were: "good-bad"; "worthless-valuable"; "weak-strong"; "happy-unhappy"; "lazy-active"; "smart-dumb"; "friendly-unfriendly"; Interesting trends appeared when respondents also were asked to respond to the concepts "teacher," "police officers," and "civil rights leaders." Interestingly, the group which was positive toward Black Power gave slightly less favorable ratings to "teachers" and "police officers" and slightly more favorable ratings to "civil rights leaders" than did the group negative about Black Power. These trends may indicate that black youngsters who are positive about Black Power tend to be more alienated toward established authority and/or more concerned in general with civil rights issues than are their peers who have negative feelings about Black Power. However, none of these trends attained statistical significance at the .05 level of confidence.

However, since self-concept frequently has been found to be related to parental and social influences and since the two groups positive and negative toward Black Power differ in the attitudes they attribute to parents and other people, it is possible that feelings about Black Power, viewpoints of parents and others, and self-concept interact in a manner that might illuminate the forces affecting the attitudes of our respondents. To explore this possibility, the two groups of respondents positive and negative toward Black Power were further divided according to responses to the item asking respondents to describe the Black Power attitude of "parents and other people" they knew. Following this procedure, six subgroups of respondents were obtained which were large enough to allow for comparison on the self-concept measures. Scores for the six groups on these measures are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Scores on Four Measures of Self-Concept and Total Self-Concept for Respondents Classified by Own Attitude and Attitude of Parents and Other People Known Toward Black Power

| Respondent's Attitude Toward Black Power | Parents' and Other Peoples' View on Black Power | Self-Concept Measures | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Academic | Social | Personal | Non-intellectual | Total |
| positive-negative (N = 8) | | 16.50 | 15.38 | 15.75 | 13.50 | 62.25 |
| positive- favorable (N = 19) | | 14.47 | 15.47 | 14.68 | 14.05 | 59.05 |
| positive-don't know (N = 9) | | 15.78 | 13.89 | 14.67 | 13.33 | 58.22 |
| positive-say nothing (N = 9) | | 14.56 | 15.56 | 14.56 | 14.00 | 60.25 |
| negative-negative (N = 10) | | 15.10 | 15.20 | 15.00 | 13.20 | 59.50 |
| negative-say nothing (N = 8) | | 16.10 | 14.75 | 14.38 | 11.50 | 57.38 |

Although the differences between the groups shown in Table 9 are generally small, the eight students who are positive toward Black Power but who say that their parents and other people they know are negative about Black Power have the highest (most favorable) average scores on two of the four self-concept measures (Academic Competence and Personal Competence) and the highest total score on the four measures combined.[25] This trend may indicate that black youngsters who tend to have positive attitudes toward Black Power but whose parents and friends tend to be negative about it may need to have a particularly positive self-concept in order to maintain their favorable orientation toward it. Alternately, it is possible that respondents in this group may tend to exaggerate feelings of self-worth in order to relieve anxieties caused by the discrepancy between their own attitudes toward Black Power and those of their parents and other people they know well. Which of these two hypotheses best accounts for the trends shown in Table 9 cannot be determined on the basis of the data available to us.

[25]This group also scored considerably higher on the item, "In most school subjects I am one of the best students in my class" than did the other five groups.

Summary of Conclusions Concerning Attitudes Toward and Knowledge of Black Power Among Black Junior High School Students

Even though the majority of students in our sample tend to be discussing Black Power with friends and/or similar-age relatives and receiving information about it from the mass media, there is little specificity in their views concerning its meaning and implications. Hardly half report that they perceive any real difference between "Black Power" and "Black Pride." Since the students in our sample tended to cite "other people" as the most important influence on their thinking and since the large majority cite "friends" as the persons with whom they discuss Black Power most frequently, we conclude that the peer group presently is the most important force in determining what these students think about the concept of Black Power.

Evidently the peer group is generally positive (but not wildly so) and open-minded about the concept of Black Power. On the one hand the majority of students in our sample either used relatively neutral terms involving "power" or relatively "favorable" terms such as "pride" or "rights" in describing what Black Power meant to them, and less than one-fifth of them said either that the term meant "nothing" to them or that they felt negative when they heard it used. Less than half the sample, on the other hand, used clearly positive terms such as "proud" and "good" in describing how they felt when they heard the term, while a little over one-third said either that they felt "nothing" or that their reaction depended a good deal on how the term was used. Barely half said they felt the Black Power movement would actually bring about or cause any change in their lives.

One reason why these students are not more uniformly enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the Black Power concept may be because parents and other adults with whom they come in contact are not particularly positive or at least do not go out of their way to communicate positive feelings about it, as shown by the fact that only 25% of the students who were able or willing to describe the reactions of their parents and other people they know said their parents and others were "understanding" or "favorable" toward the concept of Black Power. On the other hand, only 26% of this group indicated that their parents and other people they knew were openly negative about Black Power.

Respondents who said that their parents and others they know were negative about Black Power are almost equally divided in their own views, but respondents who said that parents and others they know were positive about Black Power are heavily in favor of Black Power. Other differences between students positive and negative about Black Power were that the former group more often define Black Power in terms of black pride and more often said that other people influenced their thinking than did the latter. Conversely, students who were negative about Black Power often said that Black Power meant "nothing" to them and that they arrived at their conclusions about Black Power independently of outside sources than did students positive about Black Power.

Considered together, these findings suggested that support for Black Power among the students in our sample is in good part a result of contact with other people who view it as important means to develop and encourage pride in being black.

No clear and systematic differences in general orientations involving fatalism, stress on planning and careers, sense of powerlessness, or self-concept were found between respondents positive and negative about Black Power. However, additional analysis suggested that black youngsters who are favorable toward Black Power but whose family and friends are negative either may have a particularly positive self-concept or may exaggerate feelings of self-worth in reaction to the discrepancy between their own views and those of the people around them.

Possible Social Class and Sex Differences

Examination of response patterns classified according to the social class background and sex of students in the sample did not uncover much systematic variation in respondent attitudes in accordance with these variables. For individual items, however, interesting differences were found which may justify a certain amount of speculation concerning their meaning and implications and which may be suggestive for further research. Readers of this section should keep in mind, on the other hand, that our sample was a relatively small one which provided only a few cases in several of the subgroups (cells) classified according to social-class and sex, that our measure of social class may not accurately reflect social background differences among respondents, and that the composition of the school from which we drew the sample is heavily skewed in a relatively narrow range at the low-income pole of the social-class distribution; for these reasons the methodology of the present study may not have been sensitive enough to reveal differences which do exist among students in our sample, not to mention students at other schools and in other cities.

The distributions of responses to our questionnaire items according to social class and sex of respondents are shown in Tables 10 and 11, respectively.

The data in these tables indicate that respondents from a higher social-class background (category I-III) were slightly more likely to define Black Power in terms of the power dimension than were respondents with less privileged backgrounds. Sixty-four percent of the responses of the former group ($N = 28$) as compared with only 46% of the responses of the latter group ($N = 144$) fell in the categories describing power in general or power to attain group goals ($X^2 = 3.13$; $p < .10$. Although not shown in Tables 10 and 11, it was found that both boys and girls in the highest social class category (S.C. I-III) seemed more inclined to interpret Black Power in terms of power than were their counterparts in the lower two social class categories (S.C. IV-V). Respondents in the latter categories, conversely, seemed slightly more inclined to interpret Black Power in terms of pride than were students of higher social class background, but this latter difference was too small to be statistically reliable.

As one would expect after examining the patterns described in the preceding paragraph, students of high social class background seemed slightly more inclined to see a difference between Black Power and Black Pride than were students with less privileged social backgrounds: although the difference was not statistically reliable, it is interesting to note that 68% of the students in S.C. I-III said that there was a difference, as compared with only 48% and 50% of S.C. groups IV and V, respectively. It also was found, furthermore, that 36% of the S.C. I-III students wrote out answers which specified what they thought the difference was, as compared with 13% and 9% of the S.C. IV and S.C. V students, respectively.

It may be worth noting that of the nine responses which interpreted Black Power to mean violence or fighting, four were given by males in S.C. V; these four students constituted 19% of the respondents in that category.

Table 10

Distribution of Responses to Questionnaire Items
by Social Class of Respondents

| Item | Response Category | Social Class I-III % | Social Class I-III (N) | Social Class IV % | Social Class IV (N) | Social Class V % | Social Class V (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. What does Black Power mean to you? | Power (undefined) | 39 | (11) | 25 | (22) | 21 | (12) |
| | Power to achieve rights | 25 | (7) | 18 | (16) | 29 | (16) |
| | Pride | 11 | (3) | 17 | (15) | 21 | (12) |
| | Respect | 0 | (0) | 2 | (2) | 4 | (2) |
| | Violence | 4 | (1) | 3 | (3) | 9 | (5) |
| | Nothing | 14 | (4) | 25 | (22) | 9 | (5) |
| | Other | 7 | (2) | 9 | (8) | 7 | (4) |
| 2. When you hear or talk about Black Power, How Do You Feel? | Proud | 5 | (1) | 23 | (16) | 19 | (9) |
| | Good | 30 | (6) | 16 | (11) | 23 | (11) |
| | Good (if B P not violent) | 0 | (0) | 6 | (4) | 2 | (1) |
| | It depends | 15 | (3) | 12 | (8) | 21 | (10) |
| | Ashamed | 0 | (0) | 3 | (2) | 0 | (0) |
| | Negative | 20 | (4) | 20 | (14) | 8 | (4) |
| | Nothing | 10 | (2) | 7 | (5) | 12 | (6) |
| | Other | 20 | (4) | 13 | (9) | 15 | (7) |
| 3. Is there a difference between Black Power and Black Pride? | Yes | 68 | (15) | 48 | (32) | 50 | (24) |
| | No | 18 | (4) | 37 | (25) | 31 | (15) |
| | Don't know | 14 | (3) | 15 | (10) | 19 | (9) |
| 4. What were the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power? | Mass media | 26 | (10) | 24 | (21) | 23 | (13) |
| | Other people | 34 | (13) | 39 | (34) | 54 | (31) |
| | Perceived social conditions | 13 | (5) | 14 | (12) | 7 | (4) |
| | Self | 21 | (8) | 10 | (9) | 9 | (5) |
| | Nobody | 3 | (1) | 7 | (6) | 3 | (2) |
| | Other | 3 | (1) | 7 | (6) | 3 | (2) |

Table 10 (Cont'd.)

Distribution of Responses to Questionnaire Items
by Social Class of Respondents

| Item | Response Category | Social Class I-III % | I-III (N) | IV % | IV (N) | V % | V (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Who do you talk to about Black Power? | Friends | 48 | (13) | 50 | (48) | 40 | (28) |
| | Young relatives | 11 | (3) | 10 | (10) | 16 | (11) |
| | Families (parents) | 26 | (7) | 17 | (16) | 19 | (13) |
| | Teachers | 0 | (0) | 7 | (7) | 7 | (5) |
| | Nobody | 15 | (4) | 16 | (15) | 19 | (13) |
| 6. What do your parents and people you know say about Black Power? | Parents are negative | 18 | (4) | 25 | (15) | 20 | (9) |
| | Parents "understand" or are favorable | 27 | (6) | 19 | (12) | 20 | (9) |
| | Parents' views unknown | 9 | (2) | 13 | (8) | 9 | (4) |
| | Parents say nothing | 27 | (6) | 29 | (18) | 31 | (14) |
| | Other | 18 | (4) | 16 | (10) | 20 | (9) |

Table 11

Distribution of Responses to Questionnaire
Items by Sex of Respondents

| Item | Response Category | Sex Male % | Male (N) | Female % | Female (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. What does Black Power mean to you? | Power (undefined) | 25 | (15) | 27 | (30) |
| | Power to achieve rights | 25 | (16) | 21 | (23) |
| | Pride | 16 | (10) | 18 | (20) |
| | Respect | 1 | (1) | 3 | (3) |
| | Violence | 11 | (7) | 2 | (2) |
| | Nothing | 11 | (7) | 22 | (24) |
| | Other | 11 | (7) | 6 | (7) |

Table 11 (Cont'd.)

Distribution of Responses to Questionnaire Items by Sex of Respondents

| Item | Response Category | Sex: Male % | Male (N) | Female % | Female (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. When you hear or talk about Black Power, How Do You Feel? | Proud | 19 | (9) | 19 | (17) |
| | Good | 34 | (16) | 19 | (17) |
| | It depends | 6 | (3) | 21 | (19) |
| | Ashamed | 0 | (0) | 2 | (2) |
| | Negative | 17 | (8) | 15 | (14) |
| | Nothing | 4 | (2) | 12 | (11) |
| | Other | 19 | (9) | 12 | (11) |
| 3. Is there a difference between Black Power and Black Pride? | Yes | 50 | (21) | 53 | (50) |
| | No | 33 | (14) | 31 | (30) |
| | Don't know | 17 | (7) | 16 | (15) |
| 4. What are the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power? | Mass media | 27 | (16) | 23 | (28) |
| | Other people | 40 | (23) | 42 | (50) |
| | Perceived social conditions | 14 | (8) | 11 | (13) |
| | Self | 12 | (7) | 12 | (15) |
| | Nobody | 2 | (1) | 7 | (8) |
| | Other ; | 5 | (3) | 5 | (6) |
| 5. Who do you talk to about Black Power? | Friends | 46 | (28) | 46 | (61) |
| | Young relatives | 13 | (8) | 12 | (16) |
| | Families (parents) | 18 | (11) | 19 | (25) |
| | Teachers | 8 | (5) | 5 | (7) |
| | Nobody | 15 | (9) | 17 | (23) |
| 6. What do your parents and people you know say about Black Power? | Parents are negative | 35 | (12) | 22 | (16) |
| | Parents "understand" or are favorable | 26 | (9) | 25 | (18) |
| | Parents' views unknown | 12 | (4) | 14 | (10) |
| | Parents say nothing | 26 | (9) | 40 | (29) |

Turning to the item on student reactions, boys were somewhat more inclined than girls to express positive feelings or attitudes toward the concept of Black

Power. Fifty-three percent of the responses of the boys, as compared with 38% of the responses of the girls, were scored in the "proud" and "good" categories ($X^2 = 3.15$; $p < .10$). Girls, conversely, were more likely to express neutral-negative feelings about Black Power: 48% of the girls' responses, as compared with only 29% of the boys', were scored in the "nothing," "negative," and "it all depends" response categories ($X^2 = 5.84$; $p < .05$). Although not shown in the tables, this latter pattern seemed consistent across all three social-class categories.

Although the number of students in the total sample who expressed unambiguously negative feelings about Black Power was too small to allow for the reliable identification of sub-patterns, it is possible that S.C. V students may be less negative than S.C. I-IV students: 20 % of the responses of students in S.C. categories I-III and IV were scored as negative, but only 4 of the 48 students (8%) in S. C. V gave responses which were scored as negative.

No consistent patterns by social class or sex were evident in responses to the items dealing with whether Black Power is likely to change respondents' lives, with parents' feelings about Black Power, or with the persons with whom respondents talk about Black Power. However, it also should be noted that seven of the seventeen S. C. V boys (41%) who responded to the item asking for a description of parents' orientations toward Black Power said their parents were openly negative; for no other social class-sex grouping was the comparable figure as high as 26%.

In responding to the item, "What were the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power?", students with higher social class backgrounds more frequently cited "self" (32%) as an important influence in their thinking about Black Power than did S.C. IV and S.C. V students, respectively (15% and 11%). This tendency appeared to be operating among both boys and girls: respondents of both sexes in S.C. I-III more frequently cited "self" than did respondents from the other two social class groups (Table 12).

Table 12.

Responses to the Item, "What were the most important influences in your thinking about Black Power?" by Social Class and Sex*

| Response Category | Social Class I-III | | | | IV | | | | V | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M (N = 6) % | (N) | F (N = 19) % | (N) | M (N = 19) % | (N) | F (N = 42) % | (N) | M (N = 17) % | (N) | F (N = 29) % | (N) |
| Mass media | 100 | (6) | 21 | (4) | 26 | (5) | 38 | (16) | 29 | (5) | 28 | (8) |
| Other people | 83 | (5) | 16 | (3) | 47 | (9) | 60 | (25) | 53 | (9) | 76 | (22) |
| Perceived social conditions | 33 | (2) | 16 | (3) | 16 | (3) | 21 | (9) | 18 | (3) | 3 | (1) |
| Self | 50 | (3) | 26 | (5) | 11 | (2) | 17 | (7) | 12 | (2) | 10 | (3) |
| Nobody | 0 | (0) | 5 | (1) | 5 | (1) | 12 | (5) | 0 | (0) | 7 | (2) |
| Other | 0 | (0) | 5 | (1) | 11 | (2) | 10 | (4) | 6 | (1) | 3 | (1) |

*Percent in this table refers to the percentage of respondents in a given social-class category who gave an answer classified in the respective response categories.

Summarizing the major differences we found in responses according to social class and sex, it appears that black junior high school students with high social class backgrounds are more inclined to see Black Power as a term having political or social connotations and implications, less inclined to see it as simply a movement to express or develop pride in race, and more inclined to be thinking independently about its meaning than are students from lower status families. Cutting across social class lines, girls tended to be more neutral-negative about Black Power than boys. Social class V boys tended to stand out in defining Black Power in terms of fighting and violence, possibly because their parents - who are reported as tending to be particularly negative about Black Power - may have communicated this definition to them. (The small number of students in this latter S.C.-sex category, however, means that these latter findings must be viewed primarily as suggestive for further research rather than reliably established even for the school population from which our sample was drawn.)

One obvious reason which might explain why high social class students tend to be more independent in their thinking about Black Power and more inclined to distinguish between its possible meanings is that in general they may be more sophisticated and better informed than are lower status students.

One reason why lower status students may be more inclined to perceive Black Power in terms of pride is that students from low-status homes may feel a greater need to assert pride in race than do students from higher status families. A second reason might be that high status students see Black Power as potentially conflicting with their present (presumably more middle class) value system to a greater extent than do lower status students. Additional data possibly related to this latter explanation were obtained by asking students to respond to the item, "How do you feel about wearing Afro dress?". Responses to this item by social class and sex are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Response to the Item, "What do you feel about wearing Afro dress?"*

| | Social Class | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I-III | | | IV | | | V | | | | | |
| Response Category | M % | (N=5) (N) | F % | (N=14) (N) | M % | (N=18) (N) | F % | (N=37) (N) | M % | (N=14) (N) | F % | (N=29) (N) |
| All right | 20 | (1) | 14 | (2) | 39 | (7) | 19 | (7) | 36 | (5) | 38 | (11) |
| Pride | 0 | (0) | 0 | (0) | 28 | (5) | 11 | (4) | 0 | (0) | 7 | (2) |
| Foolish | 0 | (0) | 0 | (0) | 6 | (1) | 5 | (2) | 7 | (1) | 7 | (2) |
| Personal | 60 | (3) | 36 | (5) | 22 | (4) | 43 | (16) | 43 | (6) | 45 | (13) |
| Don't Like | 20 | (1) | 50 | (7) | 6 | (1) | 22 | (8) | 14 | (2) | 3 | (1) |

*Percent in this table refers to the percentage of respondents in a given social-class category who gave an answer classified in the respective response categories.

As indicated by the data in Table 13, students of high social status (S.C. I-III) seem to have more reservations about the wearing of Afro-American clothing styles

than do students of lower social status (S.C. IV and S.C. V). Among the former group, four out of five boys and 86% of the 14 girls who responded to the item said that they either disliked Afro dress (e.g., six students said "We are not in Africa") or considered the wearing of Afro dress to be a personal matter (e.g., "If it looks good on you"); in the other four social class-sex groups the combined percentage of response in these categories plus the "foolish" category was 65% or less. S.C. I-III girls were particularly negative about Afro dress: the percentage of girls who "don't like" Afro dress was more than twice as high as the comparable percentage for any other sub-group. Conversely, only 16% of the S.C. I-III students said they either felt "pride" or felt "all right" about wearing Afro dress, as compared with 42% in S.C. groups IV and V.

Several hypotheses may be suggested to account for the apparently greater aversion toward Afro-American dress expressed by students - particularly girls - with relatively high social class backgrounds. One explanation might be that the wearing of Afro dress is seen as discordant with middle class aspirations and values which presumably are more characteristic of S.C. group I-III than S.C. IV and V. A second might be that lower status students feel a greater need to express pride in race and see wearing of Afro dress as a way to do this. A third explanation might be that higher status students may be more sophisticated about how to achieve objectives held in common by black citizens and less inclined to believe that wearing Afro dress will make any real contribution toward the achievement of these goals. Each of these three hypotheses is compatible with data presented above on students' responses to our questionnaire items dealing with Black Power. Since our data do not allow us to assess the relative validity of these explanations, resolution of the questions at issue here are dependent on further research.

The findings reported in this section concerning social class and sex differences in attitudes toward Black Power and related matters indicate that background variables do have some important effects on these attitudes. However, since our sample was too small to allow for very reliable analysis of differences when respondents were categorized according to each of the variables, confirmation of the conclusions suggested in this section are dependent on further research with larger samples from a greater number of schools.

## Discussion

One of the major issues in connection with Black Power is whether black Americans have specific economic, political, and social goals in mind in thinking about Black Power and whether they are in sufficient agreement about these goals to translate support for the concept into improvements in living conditions. It is possible, for example, that black Americans might perceive Black Power primarily as a slogan having to do with racial pride and might participate in activities designed to show a distinctive Afro-American identity but that behavior along these lines will have little or no effect on conditions in the big city ghettoes. Such a point of view recently was expressed by a leading black educator in California:

> There are many militant blacks in our society. Far too many have defined black as wearing a 'natural,' opposing everything, and labelling everyone either a 'racist pig' or an 'Uncle Tom.' Obviously, nothing constructive grows out of

> this misdirected energy. The crying need is for education in black ethos and the establishment of attainable goals.[26]

Similarly, community organizer Saul Alinsky recently said that

> My big concern about Black Power is that we may not get it. There is so much yakking and not enough organizing to get it done. And I'm telling you that all the Swahilis, all the Afros, all the sunglasses, and dashikis and soul food and everything else won't be worth a damn without power. We talk about the necessity of black identity - it is imperative, I know how important it is - but I'm telling you that without power it isn't going to be reached.[27]

To those who agree that Black Power may not mean very much unless it is defined in terms of specific policies designed to achieve attainable goals, the results of this study will be discouraging in that only a very small percentage of the 149 students in our sample attached a specific meaning to the term. Although slightly more than half of these students said they thought there was a difference between Black Power and Black Pride, only ten students defined Black Power in a manner which indicated it might have something to do with politics or economics.

Perhaps most students of junior high school age are too immature or inexperienced to have concrete ideas about political and economic matters. On the other hand, most of them certainly have studied political and economic developments in their history and social studies classes, and perhaps it would not be unreasonable to expect young people of this age to be aware that the term "power" does have something to do with political and economic policies. If the students in our sample had seemed to be fundamentally uninterested in the concept of Black Power, one might very well decide that the term has no relevance for black junior high students and leave the matter simply at that. But lack of interest does not seem to account for the vagueness of our respondents' thinking about Black Power, as indicated, for example, by the fact that eighty-nine said they talk to their friends about Black Power.

Whether the school should play a very active part in introducing black junior-high students to various concepts and definitions of Black Power is a question that undoubtedly will generate a good deal of disagreement among teachers and administrators. A good case can be made for the view that unless systematically analyzed in the school or some other formal academic program that reaches the great majority of students, the concept of Black Power may be widely misconstrued as advocating violent methods to bring about change - a definition that does not fit the thinking of many black leaders who often use the term. Similarly, it can be argued with a good deal of justification that formal study of Black Power in the schools is needed if black Americans in the inner city are to develop specific and feasible economic and political strategies for improving

---

[26]Kenneth S. Washington, "Black Power - Action or Reaction," The American Behavioral Scientist, v. 12, no. 4 (March-April, 1969), p. 48.

[27]Lisa Hirsch, 'The Next Target of Alinsky is 'National Senility' He Finds in Americans - Even the Radical Young," CITY Chronicle, May 1969, p. 7.

the conditions of their lives. While some educators may believe that potentially controversial topics such as the Black Power movement or other significant current events developments should not be studied in the public schools, it is hard to see how units and discussions on Black Power could do any harm - and they might do a great deal of good.

What is indisputable, at least for the students in our sample, is that black youngsters do not find the school a very relevant or important source of guidance concerning the Black Power movement. Only twelve of the 149 students in the sample cited teachers in responding to the item, "Who do you talk to about Black Power?" Wherever else these youngsters are acquiring ideas and information about Black Power, it is evident that their teachers are not a major source of guidance and assistance in developing an understanding of the various ways the concept can be defined and evaluating the implications of each definition.

Black youngsters appear to be obtaining ideas and information about Black Power from a variety of sources which include parents and friends as well as the mass media. At the present time few attach a very definite meaning to the concept of Black Power. Although only a minority of the students in our sample were negative about the concept, even those who were positive about Black Power did not define it in specific terms beyond recognizing that it may have something to do with the development of black pride and protection of the rights of black Americans. As long as the concept of Black Power has only a general and amorphous meaning for most black youngsters growing up in segregated neighborhoods in the inner city, the 50% of students in our sample who said they did not think Black Power would change anything significant in their lives may well be proved correct by the history of the next ten or fifteen years.